

# Christian Community

A Program Service of the Council for Social Action of the  
Congregational Christian Churches, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.  
and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the  
Evangelical and Reformed Church, 2969 West 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio

Volume 3. No. 5

September-October, 1951

## International Relations in Your Church

By Herman F. Reissig

The size of government and the complexity of world events tend to give most of us a feeling of helplessness. But since government is never again going to be the comparatively simple and small structure that it was fifty years ago and since international relations can never be made really simple, these facts must be accepted as a challenge, rather than as an excuse for doing nothing. The problems are different and greater, which means that we have to find new techniques for making public opinion effective and we have to pay more attention. The alternative is the slow decay of democracy and the growth of uncontrolled bureaucracy.

Most of us have had an inadequate idea of how Christians should act in international relations. Let us call it the old idea. It was made up of three assumptions. (1) Earnestness and goodwill can solve any problem. ("All we need is more goodwill.") (2) The sole function of the church is to give the individual Christian character and a knowledge of Christian principles. Then he will as a matter of course, and acting alone, be a good world citizen. (3) Insofar as the church speaks to government, its job is to hold up general Christian principles and reprimand political leaders when they are not faithful to them. This assumption expressed itself in adopting lofty and often indignant resolutions, demanding this or complaining about that.

Operating under this old idea, we were not very helpful. What is the new idea? It is based on three different assumptions. (1) Accurate information and political skill are as necessary as goodwill. Without them, good intentions are not only ineffective, they may do more harm than good. (2) Our kind of world calls for group-thinking and group-action. The individual counts as much as ever but he does not count much except as he learns how to think

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## Christianity and Democracy in Europe

By Elmer J. F. Arndt

In England, France, Germany, and Italy there is a rising demand for improvement in the lot of the common man. For large sections of the population of these countries, the effect on the material well-being of the workers is the touch-stone by which domestic policies and foreign policies to a great extent are judged. Whether or not Christian people and the churches can exercise an influence on the movement for social justice is a crucial question both for the churches and for the character of the movement for social justice.

If one considers the relation of Christianity to the movement for social justice in the four countries—England, France, Italy and Germany—it is at once obvious that, broadly speaking, we have two different and contrasting situations. On the one hand, there is England and, on the other hand, there are the continental countries. The significance of this contrast is not geographical; it is based on historical differences in the relation of Christianity to the whole democratic movement.

In England, the democratic movement, including the present Labor program of nationalization, has had and has many ties and relationships with Christian movements, especially with the non-conformist varieties of British Christianity. There has been a long strain of social revolutionary Christian thought in England from Wycliffe to the Christian socialists of the nineteenth century. Non-conformists, such as the Levellers and the Friends and later the Congregationalists and the Methodists, have in various ways laid the basis for and been sympathetic to movements for social reform. Furthermore, the Utilitarians, who developed a non-theological ethics and were so insistent on reform, had a high appreciation of the ethical teaching of Jesus. It was quite impressive to find, as we did, that so many of the leaders of contemporary British Congregationalism were sympathetic to the Labor party and

that so many of the leaders of the Labor party, on both the national and local levels, were strongly influenced by Christian ethics. One Labor member of the House of Lords, for example, told us that the socialism of the Labor party was not according to Marx but according to St. Mark.

The significance of all this is that there has never been in Britain the cleavage, and even hostility, between the democratic movement and Christianity that has been so characteristic of the Continental countries. Now, if there has been this association of social reform and Christianity in some forms in the past, will the same relation hold for the future? Any attempt to answer such a question is highly speculative; still some factors in the present situation may be noted which may indicate some lines of development in the future.

### British Labor and the Church

In the first place, while it was agreed that many of the present leaders of the Labor party received their early training and impetus in the Christian churches, many had left the churches in which they grew up. Their present attitude is not so much hostility to the churches as indifference. The leaders of British Congregationalism are aware of the fact that, to a considerable extent, they have lost contact with the workers and are seeking ways and means of renewing contact with them. If one should not speak of a spiritual revival in England, one can rightly speak of a revival of concern for the workers on the part of the non-conformist churches. Furthermore, there is a growing concern for the less privileged within the Church of England. It is simply no longer true that "the Church of England is the Conservative party at prayer." The late Archbishop Temple has left his mark; and some Anglo-Catholic groups, as, for instance, the circle of which the Bishop of Oxford is the leader, are concerned with the ques-



tion of justice in the economic and social orders.

The churches find themselves confronted by a new situation which demands of them creative imagination. The extension of the welfare program to include everybody and so many of the contingencies of life has meant that the traditional philanthropic activity of the churches is no longer of first-rate importance. All that is now provided by the Welfare State. Besides, the nationalization program—its spiritual presuppositions and practical working—has posed a number of new problems.

The nationalization program, which is to say, British socialism, is to a large extent undergirded by an optimism founded on technical progress. (One of the greatest differences we found between Britain and the continental countries was the contrast between the optimism and confidence with which British people face the future and the cynicism and despair of the people on the Continent.) This optimism does, indeed, embody something of a confusion which can become quite perilous. For the management of men is not of the same sort as the management of things. The Christian churches face the task of confronting this false optimism with the realism of Christian faith.

The second area of major concern is to preserve the fundamental freedoms of the person. Obviously, social planning may, though not necessarily, threaten the freedom of the person. Britain is determined to have a *democratic* socialism; yet it cannot be denied that the very mechanics of administration of a planned economy, with its necessary centralization and supervision, pose serious questions for individual responsibility and initiative. The tendency is to reduce the individual to a mere cog in an impersonal administrative machine. Among some churchmen, at least, there is a recognition of the danger and a resolution to seek to undergird British socialism with the recognition of the worth of the person founded on man's relation to God and God's relation to man, which is the charter of human freedom.

### Italy and France

On the Continent, the situation is quite different. The democratic movement on the Continent—one has only to recall the French revolution—had no recognized roots in Christianity and was certainly anti-clerical and often anti-Christian as well. Socialism on the Continent was Marxist, and, on the whole, had an anti-religious bias. There is a widespread conviction in both France

and Italy that the Communist party is the only party which is really interested in fighting for justice for the workers. The so-called "Christian" parties are regarded as, at best conservative, if not reactionary — primarily concerned to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie and land-owners. The distance between the workers and other sections of the population in France is increased by the incredibly reactionary character of French industrialists who refuse concessions to the workers which are taken for granted in England and even in America. The close connection between the conservatives and the Roman Catholic Church—which characterizes the so-called "Christian" parties in France and Italy—makes the Christian parties doubly suspect by industrial workers. This is why so many French and Italian workers vote Communist.

France and Italy are nominally Catholic countries, but, as Roman Catholic priests themselves will explain, both countries are predominantly secular rather than Catholic. For instance, a Roman Catholic evangelist in Marseilles, Father Loew, has said that of every 100 workers, 99 do not believe in anything, either in God or the immortality of the soul. A Roman Catholic priest, a leader in "Catholic Action" in Italy, thought that only a small minority of Italians took their Catholicism with any seriousness. In both countries, Protestantism is such a small minority that it hardly has the power to stimulate the Roman Church.

The movement for social justice in France and Italy is undoubtedly led by non-Christians and by those who are anti-Christian. Yet there are various movements of minorities, yet not insignificant, within both the Catholic and Protestant churches which are concerning themselves with the problems of social justice and experimenting with new forms of community life. In Roman Catholicism there is "Catholic Action" which is seeking new forms of evangelism and a contact with the workers; the "Economy and Humanism" groups in France which are seeking to interpret economic and political problems in the light of Catholic doctrine; there are such communities as the "Jeunesse de l'Eglise" seeking to fulfill its mission in the midst of the struggle and tensions of the world. Among the Protestants one finds leaders, such as Jacques Ellul, seriously concerned with the theoretical problems of modern civilization and practical work such as the Reformed Church is doing in the Loire valley. There is the Protestant community of

Taizé with its witness of common life which operates a school and a center for retreats. These are evidences of vitality; yet they have to work in a dominantly secularist environment and discover in new ways a point of contact with people who have long since been alienated from the church and whose outlook is either Marxist or nihilist.

### The Problem in Germany

In Western Germany also, social democracy and the labor movement had been more or less Marxist and the Church identified with the aristocracy and bourgeois interest. Today, the situation is quite different. Marxism is quite out of fashion—at least as an ideology. The Social-Democratic party is no longer Marxist in its ideology. Western Germans know too much about the conditions of life in the Eastern Zone to be attracted to Communism. The Church, too, has undergone changes of attitude as a consequence of the struggle against Nazi paganism.

The greatest spiritual danger which confronts Western Germany today is not the growth of Communism from within but a pervasive cynicism and social irresponsibility. Many reasons are given for the growth of this attitude. Many Germans have lived under four different regimes and still more under three. Soldiers have been regarded as heroes and then as social outcasts. Germany was first disarmed and now is urged to take a part in the defense of Western Europe. People who assumed political responsibility during the Nazi regime now must be de-Nazified; and so on. Whatever the reasons, there is a reluctance on the part of many Germans, especially young Germans, to identify themselves with anything, including democracy. For many the prudent course in all things is "neutrality." This social irresponsibility can also clothe itself in religious terms. It is at least plausible that there is a connection between the present interest in eschatology and the dominant social cynicism.

The situation is too fluid at present to hazard any prognostications. Yet one can report that there are a number of hopeful movements in the German churches which hold out a promise that the churches in Western Germany will play a more vital role in the movement for social justice in the future.

First of all, there is vital interest of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland in social questions. The very fact of that interest is significant. Second, there is Evangelisches Hilfswerk, which



has a quite different function from the Innere Mission. The latter's program was philanthropic. Hilfswerk conceives of its program as a frontal attack on bad social conditions and setting up what might be called pilot projects for a constructive approach to social problems. Then there are the Evangelical Academies which are doing something to bring together people for the discussion of practical problems. Finally, there are individual persons and particular projects, such as Dr. Fricke with his housing and apprentice home project at Heilsberg, Pastor Symanowski and his home for apprentices and students in Mainz-Kastel, especially concerned to bring workers into contact with the Gospel and students of theology into contact with the workers.

No one can say what the shape of things will be in the future. This much at least is evident: there is in Western Germany a beginning of a new relationship between the Church and the people. There are many obstacles and difficulties in the way ahead; but there are dedicated and able men, both clergymen and laymen, who have given themselves to the purpose of bringing the Gospel to the alienated workers and pressing the churches to enter the struggle for a greater measure of justice.

## Who's Who?

The Reverend Elmer J. F. Arndt, professor of Christian Ethics and Philosophy of Religion at Eden Theological Seminary, Webster Groves, Missouri, is chairman of the Commission on Christian Social Action. A member of the 1951 European Seminar, conducted by the Council for Social Action, he is remaining in Europe to lecture and to assist in the Evangelical and Reformed Church's world service program.

The Reverend Herman F. Reissig, International Relations Secretary of the Council for Social Action, prepared the article on "International Relations in Your Church" at the request of local church leaders who are looking for help in building an informed and effective Christian opinion.

## UN Week

Program suggestions for observing United Nations Week, prepared by the Church Peace Union, are being mailed with this issue to Congregational Christian readers. Evangelical and Reformed ministers have already received them in a mailing from the Board of Christian Education and Publication.

## International Relations in Your Church

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with others and engage in common action. (3) Governmental leaders need careful, constructive suggestions even more than they need admonition to "practice Christian principles." Many of them are as anxious to do right as any minister or deacon.

The new idea requires more of us than the old idea. Some may think it requires too much. "We are not experts," we say. The answer is that we must try patiently to make ourselves as expert as possible. In a democracy, this is our privilege and our responsibility.

### I. Methods of Education

Actually, no clear line can be drawn between education and action in international affairs. If a group has increased its understanding of an international problem it has done something worthwhile, even though it has taken no overt action.

1. *The Social Action Committee.* It is a little difficult to see how international relations are going to get the attention they deserve unless the church has a special committee to lead the way. Such a committee has two educational functions: to educate its own members and to survey the whole church program, giving suggestions and help to the women's society, the men's club, the young people's organization, even to the minister. Several meetings might be given to the question, "What are the opportunities for education on international affairs in our church and what can we do to see that they are used?"

2. *The Small Forum.* A number of churches do a good job through a monthly or bi-monthly forum. Thirty to a hundred people make a good forum group. If you live in a large city you will have no trouble finding speakers, although presenting a consistently good program takes time and effort. But a careful choice of subjects and serious preparation are more important than getting an outside speaker. The emphasis should be on a brief presentation by the leader—who need not be an eloquent speaker—and on plenty of time for open discussion.

3. *The Regular Church Organizations.* A women's society in the Mid-West gave three meetings to a discussion of Point IV. The C.S.A. was glad to recommend sources of information. Before setting up new organizations it is always well to see if the existing organizations cannot do a better job. Let the Social Action committee have a talk with the president of the couples club, for example. In general, the committee should

see to it that international relations are given adequate attention throughout the church.

4. *Institutes.* If your church does not have an annual institute, that is, a series of five or six meetings in which all the people meet for worship and then divide into smaller discussion groups, why not try one? Many churches, large and small, find them invaluable. One of the subjects in the institute can be some problem of international relations. The C.S.A. will be glad to suggest materials for such a series.

5. *Informal Home Meetings.* One church has fourteen groups, with 15 to 20 members each, which meet seven times in the year for the discussion of international affairs. Most churches could have one group. Out of such informal meetings in the home might come all sorts of good things. The C.S.A. will send you a leaflet on the technique of the home meeting.

6. *Sermons.* The Social Action committee in a New York state church decided more ought to be done to acquaint the church members with the aims of organized labor. The committee asked the minister if he would be willing, on a Sunday chosen by him, to preach on "The Church and Labor," and whether on that Sunday the committee could have a special paragraph in the calendar and also if there could be a special table in the vestibule with literature on this theme, with members of the committee seeing to it that each one attending that Sunday received one pamphlet. The minister gladly agreed. There ought to be more of that kind of cooperation between the committee and the minister, with each freely making suggestions to the other.

7. *The Parish Paper and the Sunday Calendar.* Not much space is needed to carry an occasional fact or reference to a good book. A two or three sentence statement on the U. N. will help to keep the subject before the people.

8. *The Literature Table.* The writer of these notes is often surprised to see that, even in churches with a lively interest in international affairs, the literature table carries not a single magazine or leaflet on this subject. Keep that table alive with good material! Let someone be stationed at it to give some gentle hints to people as they pass by.

9. *United Nations and World Order Seminars.* Annually the C.S.A. presents three-day seminars in New York City, one in the fall and one in the spring. The committee might help one of its members to attend a seminar. Seminars can also be arranged in other parts of the country.

10. *Visits to the United Nations.* Every year several hundreds of people ask C.S.A.'s help in arranging a visit to the U. N. We are glad to perform this service, if you give us time. (Because U.N. activities have been transferred to Paris for the Assembly meeting, such visits will be possible only after January, 1952.)

11. *European Seminars.* An annual study tour of European countries, led by staff members, is now a regular part of the C.S.A. international relations program. Another



## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Additional copies may be obtained for 2 cents each. Requests from Congregational Christians should be addressed to Ray Gibbons, Director, Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York. Requests by Evangelical and Reformed, and others, as well as news items and communications, should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio.

group is being formed for 1952. Some churches might like to make it possible for their minister to take one of these great trips, although the emphasis is on lay people even more than on ministers.

*What methods have you found helpful? What do you think of the suggestions offered here? Please let us know.* The International Relations Department of the Council for Social Action will be glad to be of further assistance.

## II. Methods of Acting

1. *Letters to Newspapers.* Judging by what is published in some newspapers, everybody in the town is an isolationist. Of course it isn't so; the intelligent people merely keep quiet. An occasional, carefully written letter to the editor is still a valuable means of influencing public opinion. And your representatives in Congress read the home town newspaper.

2. *Newspaper Stories.* Especially in the smaller communities, the S. A. committee can often be instrumental in getting helpful materials published. Editors are usually not adverse to suggestions for editorials. If you plan to visit the U.N. or to attend a seminar, don't be modest; let the editor know and see that he gets a story.

3. *Radio Interviews.* If a world traveller or specialist in international relations visits your church, be sure to arrange a radio talk or interview. If you have a live committee, you might arrange to broadcast a symposium on "The Church's Responsibility in International Relations."

4. *Interviews with Congressmen and Senators.* You don't have to go to Washington to do this. Your representative is frequently at home. Ask for an interview and tell him what you think. Usually he will appreciate the personal call.

5. *Political Party Activity.* This is the kind of thing many of us know least about and like least to do. But it's a bit unrealistic to talk international relations within the walls of the church and shy away from political party meetings. Political work at the local level may not always be inspirational, but we Christians might learn something and be a little more helpful if we knew the Assembly District leaders by name.

6. *Letters to Washington.* Here are two requirements of a letter worth writing: (1)

Not more than one page. (2) Evidence on the face of the letter that the writer knows his subject—and is more interested in getting something done than in blowing off steam. The State Department has an excellent system for seeing to it that public opinion, expressed in letters, reaches the responsible officers. A local committee can, over a period of years, build a reputation in Washington for sober and helpful thinking.

(For their information and guidance, your denominational social action leaders would like to have copies of such letters.)

7. *Vote for leaders who know what time it is!*

These notes are not exhaustive. There are a hundred ways of educating and acting. There is something you can do.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

### Organizations

The Council for Social Action  
Congregational Christian Churches  
289 Fourth Avenue  
New York 10, New York

Commission on Christian Social Action  
Evangelical and Reformed Church  
2969 West 25th Street  
Cleveland 13, Ohio

Department of International Justice and Goodwill  
National Council of Churches of Christ  
297 Fourth Avenue  
New York 10, New York

The American Association for the United Nations  
45 East 65th Street  
New York, New York

Division of Public Liaison  
Department of State  
Washington, D. C.

Department of Public Information  
The United Nations  
New York, New York

United States Mission to the United Nations  
Two Park Avenue  
New York, New York

### Publications—(Partial List)

SOCIAL ACTION magazine, 6 issues per year \$1.50

Council for Social Action  
289 Fourth Avenue  
New York 10, New York

HEADLINE Series, 6 issues per year, \$2.00

Foreign Policy Association  
22 East 38th Street  
New York, New York

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, weekly,  
\$6.50 a year  
407 South Dearborn Street  
Chicago, Illinois

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, 7 issues per year. Free to church committees.  
Commission on Christian Social Action or Council for Social Action

THE REPORTER, Fortnightly.  
\$5 per year  
220 East 42nd Street  
New York, New York

THE NATION, Weekly. \$7 a year  
20 Vesey Street  
New York, New York

UNITED NATIONS MEMORANDUM  
Occasional. \$1 a year  
Department of International Justice and Goodwill  
National Council of Churches  
297 Fourth Avenue  
New York, New York

THE NEW YORK TIMES. Sunday Edition,  
\$12.50 a year (3 months, \$3.25)  
Times Building  
229 West 43rd Street  
New York, New York

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Biennial. 10c.  
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Washington 25, D. C.  
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